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GERHARDT HAUPTMANN.

"Say what you will," wrote the morose and fantastic Beddoes, "I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow, no creeper into wormholes, no reviver even, however good. Such ghosts as Marlowe, Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts; the worm is in their pages; and we want to see something that our great grandsires did not know." If this be true—and does any one question it, when the long list of brilliant attempts at tragedy from the pens of poets of undoubted talent, nay genius, is remembered which have disappointed the expectations of our century in France, England and Germany—if this be true, if our modern dramatist must bid farewell to Sophocles and Shakspeare and forget Seneca and Racine—then we may with some confidence heed the promptings of the heart and mind, which declare that after all Hauptmann may be "the man." One is always much embarrassed when confronted with some new thing. By what standard shall it be measured? Dare we allow ourselves to be pleased, and, still more rash, venture to express our pleasure at something wholly unprecedented? It is all very safe to take pleasure in conventional fashion, along paths well fenced to right and left by respected criticism; but to declare that in some open wilderness one has thoroughly enjoyed one's self, seems to argue a dash of reckless boldness or sheer stupidity.

What shall we say of Hauptmann's work? Is it entitled to the noble name of tragedy? He who accepts Mr. Taine's definition of art will of course not be unwilling to confer the title of poem on any clever piece of realism. But to us, poetry is not the handmaid of science, is not a mere illustrator; a concrete expression of abstract truth. We have

had our doubts as to "Mr. Sledge the Medium," and not a few other compositions of Mr. Browning, great poet though he be. Man imitates, but soon he is not content with imitation; he creates, or more correctly speaking, he makes his imitation yield a more unalloyed æsthetic pleasure than nature, on account of her very complexity, can do, except at very rare or fortunate moments. The brightest or noblest art, that art which nature cannot rival, presents the ideal distinctly, quickens in us a certain spiritual energy by inspiring an extra-natural certainty that the perfect is not a spectral category, but one into which all things are destined in the end to fall. Of course the finality of the ideal can be presented negatively and positively. By the statuary, whose marble and bronze mean permanence and speak of reality, the beautiful must clearly be set forth directly. In the poem, whose materials are in the last analysis successive sounds suggesting mental images that follow or supplant each other, materials that inevitably convey an impression of impermanence and vanity, the negative presentation of the ideal is more potent. Hence in the drama stress and sorrow have vanquished the ideal of peace and happiness. By the doom of evil and error the survival of good and truth can be more effectively insinuated than by a futile attempt to express their permanence directly. We would not therefore insist that a poem, particularly a dramatic poem, should deal only with things in themselves likely and amiable. Let it make us feel the presence of the ideal world and we shall be content, no matter what its manner of structure, no matter what the materials it elects to fashion. Of course it will ever differ from the oration, in that oratory has for its end the persuasion of us who hear, to move our wills and make us do or forbear from doing its purpose. The poem does not attempt to convince or persuade. It solves no problem, recommends no methods. It simply succeeds, if it be a true poem, in setting the ideal before us, and making us bow down to worship its perfection. If it puts any compulsion upon us, it is not to *do* this or that, but

to *be* it. Therefore we can ask of no dramatic poem that it be moral in the sense of ethically instructive.

Our judgments of what is really requisite for a tragedy in order that it be a poem of high order have been possibly confused by a narrow conception of beauty. Just as in the sensuous world the seemingly pleasurable must be carefully distinguished from the beautiful, so in the moral world what elicits our approval as good must be distinguished from what creates enthusiasm, as being again the beautiful. Even in the rational world the beautiful has its place. Philosophic systems not only convince us or fail to do so, but they can impress us because of their self-sufficient coherence and exuberance of interior life with a sense of their beauty. Whatever stands not in need of anything else to justify its existence to us, whatever is conceivably its own vital end, besides arousing special direct feelings, stimulates indirectly our æsthetic self to action. Now, the drama deals with conduct. It is made up of monologues and dialogues implying action, not describing it. The beauty that we should demand of it as essential, is ethical, not sensuous or rational. These other kinds of beauty, so to say, may be present, but can be conceived as absent, without impairing the character of the drama, as poem, as a concrete presenter of the ideal by means of words. We are of course likely to overlook this, because we have had till now no great examples of such work which sought and won success on purely dramatic lines. The Greek stage was scarcely differentiated from the rostrum. Declamation, narrative and oratory, were still in the eyes of Sophocles legitimate dramatic means. The chorus with its lyric odes made rhythm and verbal charm an attraction, and to a great extent imposed them on the drama proper. The plays of Shakspere discard the lyric ode. The oration however, still keeps its place to some extent. Bits of choice language, not given because needed by the drama as such, but supposed to add nobility, dignity, and sweetness to it, are not rare. Nevertheless, we see that the drama now believes

in itself, so that the help it gets of this adventitious sort is relatively insignificant when compared with its own stern and legitimate splendors.

But Hauptmann ventures to create tragedies in which he relies on the inherent power of the drama alone. Verbal and stylistic beauties are abandoned. Verse-forms to charm the ear are not used. And surely thereby the illusion of the drama is increased. The language is such as under given circumstances given characters might be expected to use with no external pressure, such as that exercised by the consciousness of a critical audience. When a tragedy of Racine has been played, we feel it was written and acted for us, with us in view. Hauptmann has not allowed his characters to take our existence into consideration and consequently we believe them to be real men and women not the puppets of the god of Fiction. Hauptmann has also abandoned the thought that the chief characters must be in themselves good or noble. The drama is concerned with action not characters. Its beauty is to be primarily that of the action. Its nobility and dignity must emerge from that and from its consequences. Hence he does not feel obliged to introduce us to a cloister of saints, or to a drawing room of gentle people. Like Shakspeare he goes forth into the world, but, unlike Shakspeare he furnishes the characters it gives him for heroes with no wedding garments of conventional respectability or social importance. For Hauptmann is wholly of an age in which science has made accuracy a virtue, anachronism distasteful, and every disguise and compromise of recognized truth ridiculous, not to say offensive. He relies for his success on the mutual action of character on character. He is unsparing in his contempt of the un-ideal, and the ideal is perhaps all the more vividly presented to our minds because he somehow forces our consciences to present it to themselves, transmuting by a vital necessity the despair of his catatrophe into ecstatic faith, tranced vision of what he has made us feel must be.

Are there still any who will say: Why put the evil the

ugly and the ignoble on the stage, when there is so much of these in the world about us? A plausible plea. Yet, let us consider. Is it true that the world shows us evil as evil, ugly as ugly, ignoble as ignoble? If it did, could we ever be misled into abandoning ideals, and condescending to unworthy compromise with things hideous, base, or petty? Surely not. If the artist can contrive to make us see and feel the world as it is, its evil, ugliness, and coarseness would be self-destructive and their opposites would appear as alone real, eternal, and capable therefore of giving stability and durableness to life. To have imparted an unreasoned personal conviction of the impossibility of life without goodness, nobility, refinement, and sweetness, is to a living man tantamount to proving their possibility, probability, nay their reality as though by the evidence of the very senses.

To vindicate the most vigorous realism in the hands of a conscientious, healthy dramatist is not of course to say that Racine has no charm, Sophocles no power, Shakspeare no completeness of illusion. It is simply to point out the possibility of a bare drama, working upon us as such, without outside aid. To object that there is great danger in dissolving time honored partnerships like those referred to above, and that to discard the help they offer, is rash because there will be need of greater genius to achieve success in such work, equal to that of Sophocles, Racine, or Shakspeare in theirs,—is to say self-evident things. The question is not one of ease or difficulty but one of possibility. It is first of all a question of creative impulse. If there is to be a drama of to-day it will have to be such a drama. Everything points in that direction. The hopelessness of Shaksperian revivals is clear. Revivals are never rivals to originals. The rival of Shakspeare will be a realist, or will never exist.

In Hauptmann's first great work—in some respects the most audacious and hazarded of his experiments, or shall we say achievements, there occur some words on this subject that are worth quoting though of course they are

words suited to the character speaking them and may be by no means expressive of the author's own views.

Helen: Perhaps you can inform me on a matter. There is so much talk in the newspapers about Zola and Ibsen: are they great poets?

Loth: They are not poets at all, Miss Helen, but necessary evils. I am thirsty, and ask the poet to give me a clear quickening drink. I am not ill. What Zola and Ibsen offer, is medicine.

And here we may venture to say that that there is a great difference which no amount of genius can expunge between realism in the drama and realism in the novel. In the drama the proportions of the painful to the pleasurable, of the hideous to the attractive are those of the author. But the novelist has no such power over reader as the dramatist has over the spectator. The reader can loiter at will in pestiferous fens. The reader can stop where he pleases in the process of the narrated events and escape altogether the salutary effect of the conclusion. For him cause and effect, sin and suffering are not indissolubly linked and therefore the novelist may harm where the dramatist might do good. From the enforced succession of the play's various scenes there is no escape. Then, too, the dramatist is understood at once. A hint suffices and our system vigorously reacts from the shock. The novelist must stretch out through pages an elaborate analysis giving time for the evil, the hideous, the ignoble to filter into the soul. So, that, while doubtless Hauptmann out-Zolas Zola, he does so with a quite unexpected result, if we have founded our expectations on what we know of the novels of the Frenchman.

From Ibsen, too, our dramatist differs very materially. In the Norwegian's dramas the chief characters are usually persons, not maybe *insane* but surely *unsane*. There is in them all a certain strained extraordinariness which marks them out as exceptional people. They are morbid results of an age of transition — "between two worlds," as Mathew Arnold expressed it — the consequence of the deadly feud of science and old beliefs that have not yet reëpressed themselves in its terms, which, in the meanwhile, gives

men and women over to erratic fancy, whim, and mania as practical guides through the maze of life.

The characters in the dramas of Hauptmann are common-place, familiar beings, such as we have all met or can readily meet if we choose to do so. We need no introduction. We know them by recognition or intuition. Their fate, therefore, concerns us if possible more nearly than that of Ibsen's characters. Twenty Solnesses would have to fall from the house-tower to create in us the complete horror and sense of doom that the suggested suicide of Helen does. And be this said not in disparagement of Ibsen. Doubtless Hauptmann and his German brother dramatists are the legitimate descendants of Goethe, as the poet of certain scenes in the First Part of Faust, but to Ibsen they must owe much of their courage and success.

"Vor Sonnen Aufgang" gives us a fearful picture of unearned wealth degrading men below the level of brutes. An old drunkard peasant, made rich, like many of his neighborhood, by the discovery of coal on his lands, has two daughters. When his wife dies, the younger is sent to a boarding school and made a lady. The older one is courted and married for her money by a gentlemanly university student. He speculates with what he gets from his father-in-law, becomes rich in his own right, loses conscience, becomes through and through corrupt. His wife is addicted to drink. The farmer marries a coarse, insolent, ruffianly woman, made intolerable by her pride of wealth. Helen, the younger daughter, is brought back from school into this destestable environment. Her brother-in-law, Hoffman, ought to be a comfort to her, but he has sunk, in reality though not apparently, to a level below theirs. Loth, Hoffman's old university friend, a member of the Reichstag, having been imprisoned for radical views, comes to write up the situation of the laboringmen in the coal fields and of the peasants to whom their labors bring unearned affluence. He hears of Hoffman's being there, visits him, stays with him, little by little gets his bearings, and finds Hoffman his

irreconcilable enemy should he persist in his purpose. Helen falls in love with Loth, the first good man she has ever seen, to her a revelation of hitherto undreamed possibilities. Loth pities and loves Helen but does not know of her father's and sister's hopeless drunkenness. The family physician called in to attend Hoffman's wife chances to be an old friend of Loth, and he makes up his mind to save him from the fearful curse of marrying a drunkard's daughter. The law of heredity is wielded mercilessly by this cynical little bachelor physician, till Loth in a frenzy takes flight and leaves Helen no visible escape but suicide from the infectious vileness about her.

A terrible subject, awfully handled. Already in this first play Hauptmann succeeds in giving us the background so cleverly by quite natural chance hints that we can hardly tell how we got to know all we do about the previous history of the family. There is no narrative, no relation irrelevant from the point of view of the characters on the stage, no mechanical devices for giving us a clue.

We can readily understand that this piece should have been made a battleground between old school and new school. It was for the new movement what *Hernani* was for the literary France of the first half of our century. His next drama is "*Das Friedensfest*." Here the thesis is that disparity of education and instruction, and the consequent diversity of interests, manners, and moral standard, make congenial felicity and home life impossible. These children of a wrecked union are mutually repellent personalities. All have more or less excellent intentions, and all have made each other miserable with a persistency that seems deliberate and wicked to each one when viewing the rest. One only might be saved by his love of music which takes him out of himself. He loves a sweet, simple girl. Her mother persuades her daughter's lover, whom she has taken into her genial heart as a son, that he must make heroic efforts and bring about a general family reconciliation with her aid. The attempt is made at fearful cost and

fails. William determines not to marry the girl he loves lest he should make her wretched, too, but the girl, with eyes open to all the tiger life of William's family, trusts to him and love in spite of William's self and her own mother.

Never was a more ghastly picture drawn of a wrecked home. A mere unwillingness to give each other the benefit of the doubt, the unhesitating ascription of malignant motives to each other, have undermined a family, and ruined morally every member of it but one, who is saved, as it were, by fire through the instrumentality of an unselfish devotion to a noble art, and contact with two noble self-oblivious women, both of whom he loves, one as mother the other as betrothed.

"Einsame Menschen"—"Lonely Souls"—is a marvellous study of how we cannot lift ourselves, ethically, above our age; how we may think, but cannot with impunity attempt to feel and act, apart from it. What was meant as pure and disinterested is besmirched by suspicions natural to those on a lower ethical plane, and actually becomes, through the instrumentality of those suspicious, what it seemed to them to be. According to our social conventions any relation between man and woman, intimate and real, which is not imposed by physical affinity or cannot seek refuge beneath the wings of monogamous marriage, is *a priori* sinful. Consequently a purely intellectual and spiritual friendship between the married hero and a clever, fascinating young woman is compelled to assume first an appearance, and then a character, such as would conflict with the wife's claim to exclusive loyalty and love. An extremely painful subject to be sure; but its treatment is conscientious, and leaves the soul sick with longing for a world in which the spirit shall rule, and the flesh neither intrude nor dare to bring aspersions against the exercise of its divine freedom of intercourse with spirit. What a sweetly pathetic picture, that noble, unjealous self-belittling wife, who, if her husband only knew, could become whatever he chose! If only "this too, too solid flesh would melt"! But it does not at man's bidding;—

heeding only the slow working laws of social progress.

"Die Weber" which has been acted this winter in America is not, of course, as some of our press critics have asserted, a Socialistic drama, still less one whose authorship could be in cold blood—or rather let us say in cold printer's ink—ascribed to a certain cisatlantic anarchist! It simply presents a strike, makes it live before us, shows us the misery that occasions it, and the misery it occasions; leaves us profoundly convinced of the solidarity of society, and the need that our conscience should correspond to our consciousness of that fact. But of this drama so much has been recently written that it were supereragatory to rehearse the story here. What impresses one chiefly however is that in this piece we are not dealing with the individuals so vividly presented, as much as with masses of individuals. The interest inheres in the cause, not in particular cases. The catastrophe does not involve any main promoter of the movement so far as the spectator sees, but only an innocent, great-hearted protestor. The movement then is the hero; it has many and various representatives, and when we have heard and seen the play, the actual human world has been before us in process of evolution, an evolution in which individuals are sacrificed to the clearer manifestation of the type.

But what shall we say of "Hannele" and the chorus of its mocking critics of the American Press? There are many varieties and degrees of excellence. Some books stand out colossal from the background of past reading. Others have a marble moonlight whiteness, an outline solemnly simple, a columnar symmetry, a statuesque nobility. Others again are mere flowers with roadside modesty, with a childlike grace, and so captivating a perfume, rare and faintly exquisite, that we would rather see the colossus, the cathedral, the temple, the statue overthrown and demolished, than have this one quivering thing, all alive with delicate feeling, ruffled by too rough a wind, wilted by a touch too coarse. Now "Hannele," the little

stranger from overseas which was so inhospitably treated by our New York volunteer censors of the stage, is one of those masterpieces that defy criticism. It is too winning and affecting to permit of unbiased scrutiny. From beginning to end, excepting a few songs, it is one quick, nervous dialogue. It is quite as realistic as any other piece of Hauptmann in treatment. He has made us acquainted in it with a bit of the world in which we actually live. Nor has he chosen some favored spot in it, where the envied few delight to dwell. It is a patch of common soil, not beautiful in itself, but the sort of thing we have all about us. The illumination is such as to impart to everything preternatural glory. He takes one human lot, but we know that behind it are the terrible millions. To make us feel more keenly, the lot is that of a child, the motherless little step-daughter of a brutalized drunkard. Nothing could be simpler or more original. A painstaking study in child-psychology was not unheard of before "Hannele," but was there ever such a study? Furthermore it is the psychology of its dream state, less fettered, more subtly self-revealing, which is boldly set forth as real to us, quite as though we had been entranced and made to feel the child's fever pulse throbbing in our own arteries. But this "dream play" has been recently translated into English and its plot need not detain us here. By it Hauptmann may be known to those who watch the signs in our literary heavens. What then shall we say of it, and of Hauptmann?

Shall we venture to assert that Gerhardt Hauptmann's work answers to the great modern demand for a new drama that may be to us what Shakspeare's was to Elizabethan England? In our world in which aristocracies are obsolescent if not obsolete, with the vastly altered social conditions which we ascribe to machinery and popular government, can we feel quite satisfied by dramatic work which does not present us the problems of life in their present complex form? And after all has been said, was not Shakspeare a realist? Did he not give us Elizabethan England upon the stage?

What with us is literary affectation, when appearing in the work of Beddoes for instance, was natural and necessary then. To-day life is sterner. Life is arrayed in less showy colors. We are more matter of fact. The imagination plays no great part in the life of our privileged classes. Oratory is not the power it was. Facts have been made to speak with figures for mouthpiece. But to attempt a judgment of contemporary genius is folly. Time alone is the winnower. Whatever may be said against "Before Sunrise" and "The Weavers," and there is much that can be said with much plausibility, the charge of "brutal réalism" cannot be maintained against "Hannele." If anything could convince us that the drama of actual life, using its language abandoning all traditional elegance, rhetorical exaggeration, in a word all stage-strut and stage rant, can attain to higher glories than the classicist supposed possible, it would be this piece, the effect of which is that of the work of an idealist infinitely strengthened by the realistic method. And in the long run it seems clear that the victory is to the Goethe of Faust, not to the Goethe of Iphigenia, to Heine and not to Schiller, in spite of the latter's nobleness of aim. We want to be shown the loftily tragic in the actual. Thus will our daily burden-bearing seem less ignoble, and our drudgery may acquire a majesty of its own. We want to be told, as only the poet can tell us, that it is the human soul, not the circumstances of life that make our dignity; not intellectual achievements and polish, only possibly to the few, but moral worth that distinguishes the hero from the common man; and how can this be more forcible set forth than by the selection of circumstances adverse to outer dignity, refinement and culture, notwithstanding which, and over which, the soul is made to triumph?

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.